

School consolidation Task Force
Teachers and Staff Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2018
5:00pm–7:00pm
Colonial School District Office

Members present:

Dusty Blakey, Chair
Jeff Taschner, Deputy Chair
Gerald Allen, Director of Human Resources, New Castle County Vo-Tech
David Davis, DSEA Administrator
Tammy Croce, Executive Director, Delaware Association of School Administrators
Christine Smith, Director of Human Resources, Red Clay School District
Emily Falcon, Chief Financial Officer, Colonial School District

Members absent:

Angeline Rivello, Delaware Department of Education (No longer with DDOE as of 2/2/18)
Mike Hoffmann, DSEA
Matthew Meyer, New Castle County Executive
Mary Cooke, Director of Human Resources, Capital School District
Loretta Greig, Parent, Lake Forest School District

Members of the public present:

Robert Overmiller, Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
Nermin Zubaca, Delaware Department of Education

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 5:09 pm.

Dr. Blakey, the sub-committee chair, welcomed the members as well as the public attendees.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes from January 10, 2018

A motion was made by Mr. Allen and seconded by Mr. Davis to approve the minutes. The motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

III. Review and Discussion of Various Available Data Collected Related to Similar Schools Systems Nationally

Dr. Blakey asked Mr. Zubaca to walk the group through the study he conducted at the request of the sub-committee. Mr. Zubaca’s study, titled “National Local Education Agency Comparison: Staffing, Resources, Size, and Demographics”, focused on comparing school districts across the nation and what newly created county-based school districts would look like in Delaware. Mr. Zubaca said the study compared districts on their student enrollment, physical size of the districts (square miles), as well as their

student demographics (student race, % of students in poverty, % of ELL students, and % of students with IEPs). He noted that the study looked at the best matched districts and evaluated their fiscal (funding system, expenditures, and revenues) and staffing structure (number of educators in each school district), as well as their student performance (reading and math proficiency, and graduation rate).

Mr. Zubaca said the study found that the newly created districts in Delaware would rank 61st (New Castle County School District, approx. 65,000 students), 318th (Kent County School District, approx. 24,500 students), and 270th (Sussex County School District, approx. 28,000 students) in the nation, and that the study showed the average district size of districts nationwide (about 16,000 school districts in the sample) was approximately 3,000 students.

Mr. Zubaca said that New Castle County School District would compare to 32 school districts across the nation based on the student enrollment, Kent County to 142 school districts, and Sussex County to 131 school districts. He noted that Delaware school districts were compared to only two districts each nationally (except Sussex, who compared to only one school district) when other factors were taken into consideration (district physical size and student demographics). He stated that New Castle County School Districts compared to Guilford County Schools, North Carolina and Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools, NC, Kent County School Districts compared to Bossier Parish, LA and Aiken 01, SC, and Sussex County School Districts best match was Johnston County Schools, NC.

The sub-committee members called for inclusion of more footnotes across the study in order to emphasize which data sources were being used and for which school year. They requested the study be revised so that fiscal, enrollment, poverty, and demographics data is comparable across years. In addition, the sub-committee asked Mr. Zubaca to:

- combine all districts and school administrators into a separate student/administrator ratio;
- include teacher and administrator compensation into the study;
- include demographics of the teachers (certifications/license data, educational level, years of experience); and
- include state national assessment of educational progress (NAEP) data if available, as well as dropout rates.

Mr. Zubaca said that he will work on it and send the sub-committee the updated report once finalized.

Mr. Zubaca expressed his overall takeaway from the study was that it was difficult to find comparable districts to Delaware, and that even those that matched closest were not outperforming newly created Delaware districts on average. He said that not many conclusions can be made based on the data provided, as other sub-committees recommendations, notably transportation and finance, would largely impact the fiscal and staffing structure of the newly created districts.

IV. Review and Discussion of Task Force Progress to Date and Concerns of Overlap of Subcommittees Work

Dr. Blakey noted that although the sub-committee is making a concrete progress, it would be beneficial that the group, or at least several members of the sub-committee meets with the other sub-committees to address overlapping issues in order to reach a consensus on a proposal that the sub-committees will present to the task force. The sub-committee agreed that this is a great step forward, and it raised the question of who will be writing a final report.

V. Setting a Path Forward

Dr. Blakey stated that we are using data to back-up recommendations of the sub-committee and that meeting with other sub-committees will help with making recommendations. The sub-committee agreed that the final report should highlight that the funding system does not need to be blown up, but rather introduce slight modifications to the existing funding system. He also noted that the current unit count system has been characterized as a system that works well for students' needs.

VI. Selection of Future Meeting Dates

Dr. Blakey recommended that the sub-committee does not decide on the date of the next meeting, as he tasked himself to reach out to other sub-committee chairs in order to try and schedule a joint sub-committee meeting. Dr. Blakey said he will reach out to the sub-committee with several dates and times for the next meeting upon hearing from other chairs.

VII. Public Comments

Mr. Overmiller stated that the sub-committee is moving in the right direction by getting the data and putting it together so that there is something to look at.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Croce made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded by Ms. Falcon. Motion carried. The chair adjourned the meeting at 6:56 pm.